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Fessenden Named Executive Director of Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park in Geneva

By Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: An economic development leader and former New York State assemblyman has been named the executive director of the Cornell Agriculture & Food Technology Park (CAFTP), in Geneva, NY. Daniel J. Fessenden will assume the position in early September.

"I see the park as a catalyst for coupling private-sector investment with the world-class research being conducted at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station," said Fessenden, a 1987 graduate of Cornell University who has a keen understanding of economic development in upstate New York. "The park provides a tremendous opportunity to leverage this research for the benefit of Cornell, the region, New York State, and the food and agricultural industry."

Fessenden believes the park has unbridled potential to be an economic engine for Geneva, Ontario County and the entire Finger Lakes Region. "I look forward to helping the park transition to the next phase of development - commercializing new technologies, growing businesses and creating jobs," he says.

The CAFTP enables start-up and established companies to carry out cutting edge research in food, agriculture and bio-based technologies, and will complement existing research and extension programs of the Experiment Station and Cornell University. Construction for Phase I of the 72-acre park, which is located on Pre-Emption Road in Geneva, adjacent to the Experiment Station, is underway. Phase I includes supporting infrastructure, and a 20,000 sq. ft. multi-tenant, flexible technology building.

"Dan brings his experience as a senior executive with a major Fortune 100 company to CAFTP, along with a great background in economic development in upstate New York," says Michael Manikowski, executive director of the Ontario County Industrial Development Agency, executive director of the Ontario County Office of Economic Development, and one of the members of the board of directors of CAFTP.

"Dan has a strong desire to make the agriculture and food industries in NYS stronger and more viable," says Robert C. Seem, the interim director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. "He will do this as director of CAFTP by creating stronger ties between Cornell and the agricultural and food industries in the state. The faculty at the Station are also enthusiastic about Dan. They recognize his great ability to communicate and build rapport."

Fessenden has varied experience in agriculture as a farmer, and in government as a state leader. He currently serves as manager of government and community relations for the Carrier Corporation, in Syracuse, NY, a \$9 billion global manufacturer. From 1993-99 he served as a member of the New York State Assembly, representing the 126th district. From 1987-88 he was associate director of government relations for the New York Farm Bureau.



Daniel J. Fessenden

Fessenden received his B.S. in applied economics and management in 1987, from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at Cornell University, and pursued graduate studies at the NYS College of Environmental Science & Forestry in Syracuse. In 1995, he received the CALS Alumni Association's Young Alumni Achievement Award.

CAFTP is affiliated with Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station. The Flex Technology building currently under construction will provide space for a series of firms and is expected to create up to 80 new jobs. At full build-out, the Park is expected to generate 1000 new jobs in 10 to 15 years. A 85,000 sq. ft. USDA Grape Genetics facility is also slated to be constructed on site, available for occupancy in 2006, housing 30 to 40 scientists.

More than \$7.3 million has been raised for the CAFTP from federal, state, county and city contributions, and NYSEG. At full build-out, there will be about 375,000 sq. ft. available for research development and light production by enterprises engaged in food, agriculture or bio-based technologies. Park officials are partnering with the Infotonics Center of Excellence in Canandaigua and other universities in central New York to build collaborative relationships.

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